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Press Release

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Alaska Wins \$2.5 Million Grant to Expand Employment for Youth with Disabilities *State will use "Alaska Youth Works" grant to help 600 Alaskan youth with disabilities find jobs*

ANCHORAGE: Alaska is one of just six states to win a competitive U.S. Department of Labor grant to help youth with disabilities find jobs and achieve financial independence. The state Department of Labor and Workforce Development and applied for the grant in partnership with support from the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, University of Alaska Anchorage, Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Education and Early Development, and the Anchorage School District.

"This grant means that hundreds more Alaskans with disabilities will be able to find jobs and support themselves and their families," said Commissioner Heidi Drygas.

The grant will help 600 youth with disabilities find jobs by expanding vocational rehabilitation (specialized employment training for disabled individuals), increasing the number of businesses that hire youth with disabilities, and strengthening high school transition programs that help graduating students find work. To accomplish these goals, the Department of Labor is using federal grant money to expand the number of Alaska Job Centers that have capacity to transition some youth with disabilities from Social Security Disability dependence to a self-supporting job.

Some participants in the grant programs will enter higher education or Registered Apprenticeship programs in order to build the skills necessary to obtain jobs that pay a living wage. DOWLD anticipates assisting 450 youth with disabilities attain a diploma or other educational certification. The grant was awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration.

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